



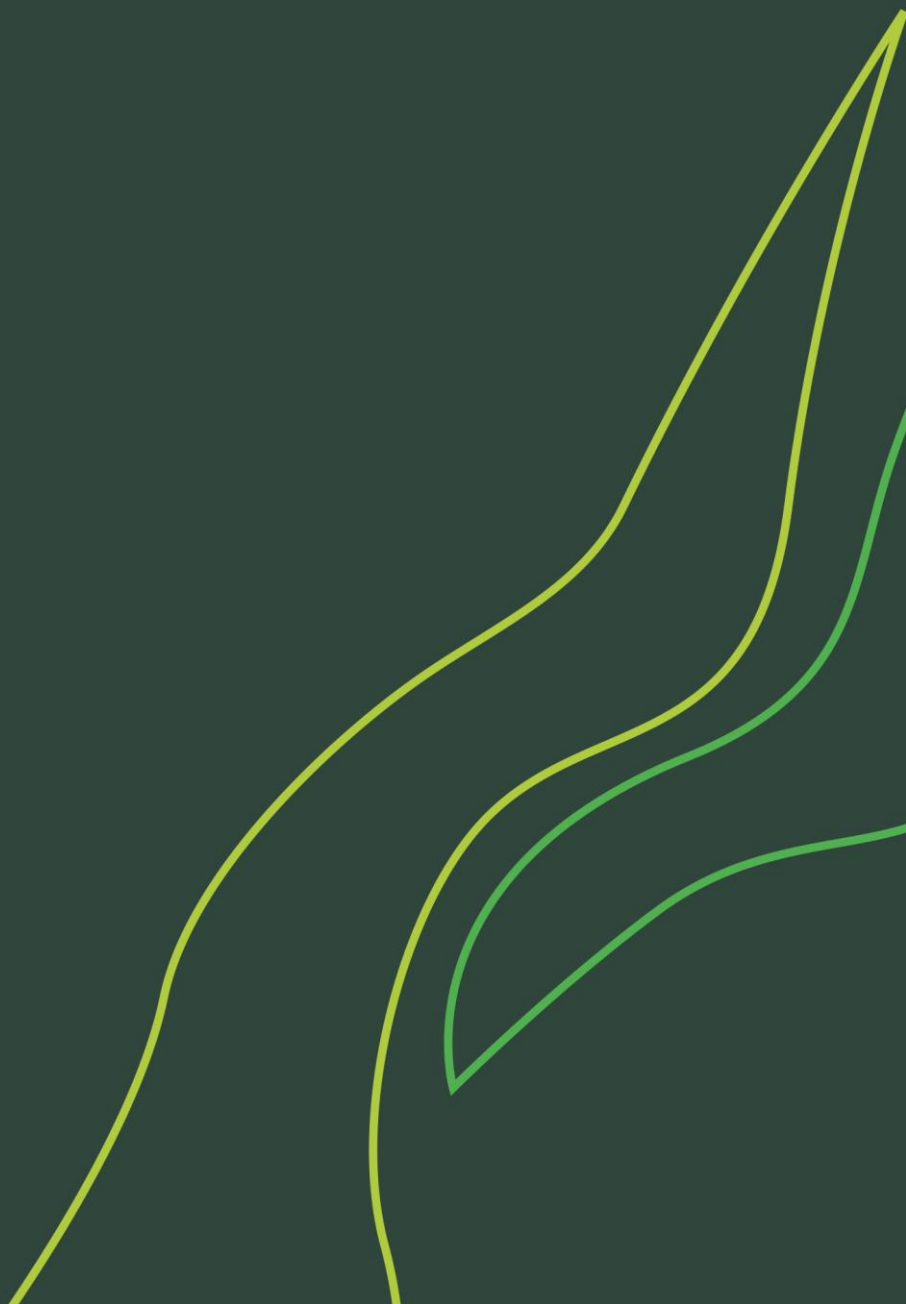
Green Infrastructure Statement

Site: Land at MoD Sealand, Green Lane East, Deeside, CH5 2LS

Client: EMCOR Ltd

Document reference: J251173-GCL-XX-XX-T-L-0830

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DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Green Infrastructure (GI) Statement has been prepared by Ground Control Ltd on behalf of EMCOR Ltd (the Applicant) to support a full planning application for the proposed development of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating scheme on land at MoD Sealand, Green Lane East, Deeside (the Application Site).

1.1.2 Renewable energy generated on-site by the solar PV scheme will support businesses on the wider MoD Sealand site and contribute to the MoD's strategic environmental targets, directly reducing carbon emissions associated with burning fossil fuels and ensuring a secure and economically beneficial energy supply.

1.1.3 The full description of the proposed development is as follows:

'Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar arrays to provide 3MW generation capacity with ancillary infrastructure including inverters, HV / LV connection, cabling, internal access track and access gates.'

1.1.4 The planning application is accompanied by the following supporting information and technical reports:

- Green Infrastructure Statement (this document);
- Design and Access Statement;
- Planning Statement;
- Pre-Application Public Consultation Report (this will be completed prior to submission of the planning application);
- Planning Application drawings;
- Flood Consequences Assessment including drainage strategy;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report and Biodiversity Enhancement strategy;
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal.

1.1.5 The remaining sections of the Statement provide further information as follows:

- Section 1.2 Green Infrastructure and Development;
- Section 1.3 The Existing Site and Context;
- Section 1.4 The Proposed Development
- Section 1.5 Scheme Assessment
- Section 1.6 Conclusion

1.2 Green Infrastructure and Development

- 1.2.1 Public bodies have a duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems including through policy and decision-making processes.
- 1.2.2 Planning Policy Wales 12 (PPW12) (Welsh Government, February 2024) sets out the Welsh Government’s land use planning objectives and how these should be achieved. It defines GI as ‘the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places’ (paragraph 6.2.1) and includes both naturally occurring and designed components at all scales which usually provide multiple benefits such as support for amenity, biodiversity, well-being and climate resilience etc. PPW12 confirms that a GI Statement should be submitted with all planning applications and that it should ‘be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal’ (paragraph 6.2.12) to achieve a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB).
- 1.2.3 In considering the effects of development PPW12 confirms that a ‘step wise’ approach should be taken to demonstrate how a NBB can be secured through a hierarchy of impact avoidance, minimisation, mitigation and habitat restoration, or compensation on- or off-site. Underpinning the step wise approach is the DECCA Framework which considers the resilience of ecosystems against specified attributes (diversity, scale, condition, connections and adaptability) to identify potential enhancements. The long-term management of secured NBB and its contribution to GI is also key to the success of a scheme. The step-wise approach is illustrated below.

Figure 12: Summary of the Step-Wise Approach

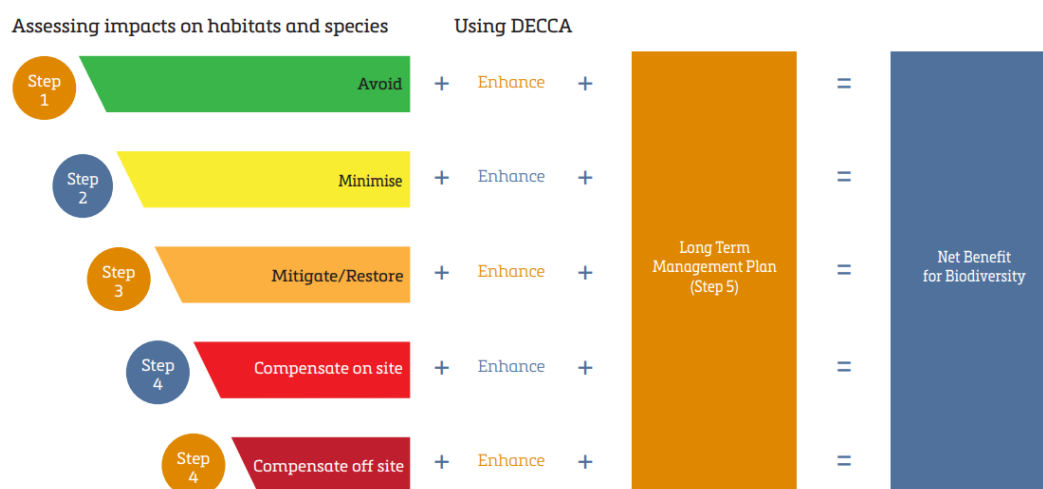


Figure A - Extract from PPW12 – Step-wise Approach

- 1.2.4 The development plan for the Application Site also addresses the need for development to support GI. At a national level ‘Policy 9 Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure’ within Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Welsh Government, February 2021) requires development proposals to demonstrate how the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity (to provide a net benefit), and the resilience of ecosystems and green infrastructure assets have been secured.
- 1.2.5 Policy EN2 ‘Green Infrastructure’ of the Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015-2030 (Flintshire County Council, adopted January 2023) confirms that ‘Development proposals will be required to protect, maintain and enhance the extent, quality and connectivity of the green infrastructure network...’ and where appropriate create new links and fill gaps to improve connectivity to the existing network.

1.3 The Existing Site and Context

Existing Site

- 1.3.1 The site location is shown on Figure J251173-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0101 within the supporting documents and the context of the Application Site is shown in the map extract below.

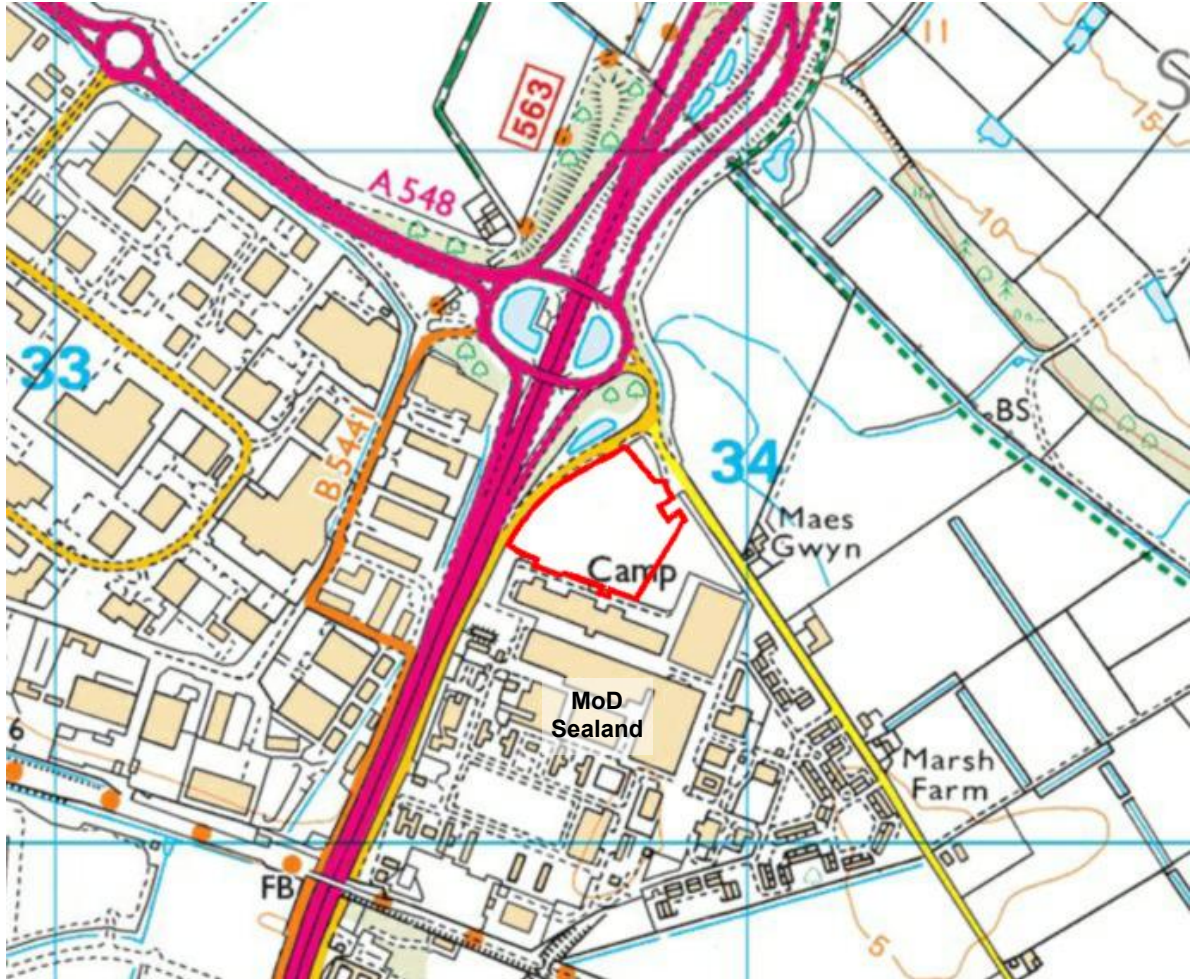


Figure B - Site Location (not to scale, grid square = 1km)

- 1.3.2 The Application Site covers 3.2 hectares (ha) of 'brownfield' land comprising a disused playing field located in the northern part of the wider MoD Sealand site and centred on national grid reference 333794,370472. The planning application boundary sits within the perimeter fencing of the MoD Sealand site which is bordered in the north and west by the A548, to the north-east by Green Lane East and to the east and south by operational areas of the MoD site.
- 1.3.3 The former playing field is laid to grass which is mown regularly and scattered individual trees are located beyond the western and south-western boundaries of the Application Site and belts of established mixed woodland are located beyond the northern and eastern boundaries. There are no trees or areas of established woody vegetation within the Application Site and no surface water on the site which is generally flat.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the Application Site

- 1.3.4 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (including habitat survey) of the Application Site has been undertaken for the proposed solar PV scheme and has informed the biodiversity enhancement proposals for the site. The existing habitat on the site is restricted to modified grassland dominated by Rye grass with a range of common forb species such as Buttercup. It is of limited botanical interest and poor species diversity and as a such it has potential for enhancement to secure NBB. Deciduous woodland in the wider area has been identified as a Priority Habitat. There are few records of protected species in the wider area but none for the site which does not provide suitable habitat for species such as Bat, Badger, Great Crested Newt etc, although its potential use by small mammals such as Hedgehog is likely and can easily be retained.

Green Infrastructure in the Surrounding Area

- 1.3.5 Land to the east of Green Lane East comprises open agricultural land and scattered isolated dwellings and although it is largely under arable cultivation there are established native hedgerows, tree belts, standard trees, wet ditches and occasional areas of standing water which provide a range of inter-connected habitats.
- 1.3.6 The road corridor to the west of the Application Site is a wide, six-lane trunk road comprising the A494 Welsh Road flanked by the A548 to the east bordering the site and the B5441 in the west providing access to the Deeside Industrial Park. This is an extensive area of industrial and commercial warehousing and land uses with few natural habitats and limited biodiversity value along its eastern side, and the highway effectively severs any connectivity between the areas either side.
- 1.3.7 Green Lane East and the farmland also support several public rights of way (PRoW) which are used recreationally including off-road routes across the fields and along the Chester Millenium Greenway to the south of MoD Sealand. These provide both a recreational and amenity resource which directly supports well-being in the vicinity of the Application Site and the greenway also provides potential connectivity over the A494 for mobile animal species.
- 1.3.8 Background Paper 2: Green Infrastructure Assessment (FCC, September 2019) was prepared to inform the Local Development Plan and provides further information about identified GI resources in the vicinity of the Application Site. A review of these documents has confirmed that the Application Site is not formally identified as GI open space and does not have other identified GI assets.
- 1.3.9 The River Dee corridor approx. 2.2km to the south of the Application Site is a key GI asset with several statutory ecological designations and there are GI components noted at the Northern Gateway strategic development site and the Chester Millenium Greenway to the south of the wider MoD Sealand site. Notwithstanding the range of habitats which exist on and in the vicinity of the of the Application Site the nearest identified GI network component is a belt of woodland to the south of MoD Sealand as shown below.

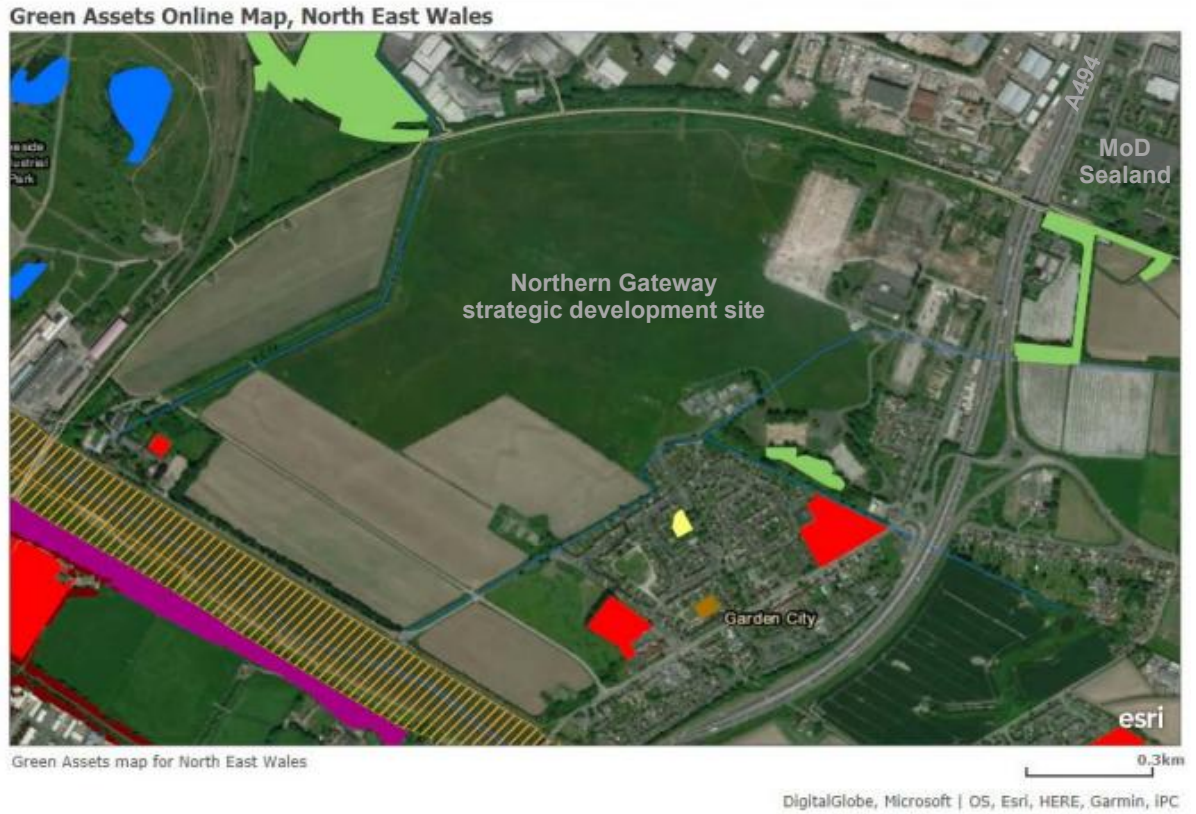


Figure C - GI Components associated with the Key Strategic Site Northern Gateway to the south-west of MoD Sealand (Background Paper 2: Green Infrastructure Assessment, FCC September 2019)

1.4 The Proposed Development

1.4.1 The proposed development involves the construction and operation of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) scheme with a generating capacity of 3MW. As a 'private-wire' scheme which will distribute electricity directly to the existing 11kV grid within MoD Sealand there is no need for a connection to the national grid although such a facility could be added to the scheme at a later date.

1.4.2 The scheme is shown on Figure J251173-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0102 Proposed Solar PV Array Layout and below.



Figure D - Site Layout (not to scale)

1.4.3 The proposed solar PV scheme will comprise a range of components which are illustrated on Figure J251173-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0103 Proposed Solar PV Array Components and main components are listed below.

- Solar PV panels to a height of approx. 2.8-3.0m above ground level (agl) and clearance of approx. 0.8m agl set on metal frames with posts driven into the ground.
- Rows of panels or 'arrays' will be spaced at intervals of approx. 7.5m from south to north with approx. 3.0m between the front edge of one row and the rear edge of the next row.
- Site access track formed from free-draining crushed aggregate constructed through the centre of the array and along the south-west boundary to provide a surfaced route for maintenance vehicles.
- A containerised HV / LV connection point will be located in the south-west corner of the site to connect with the existing wider site's 11kV grid and site network.
- Underground cables in trenches will link the arrays and run alongside the site access track to the HV / LV containerised connection.
- Retained grassland will be enhanced through the introduction of a locally appropriate range of wildflower species and long-term management including more sympathetic seasonal cutting will support its establishment and diversification to secure NBB.

1.5 Scheme Assessment

Step-wise Approach

- 1.5.1 The scheme's development has been informed by technical environmental studies to ensure that design objectives which include the need to minimise adverse environmental impact overall and achieve a NBB will be achieved. A Flood Consequences Assessment has confirmed that the retention of most of the existing grassland and use of free-draining material in the access track will ensure that surface water run-off from the panels will continue to be at a 'greenfield' rate and the contribution of the site to attenuating surface water flow will be maintained. Lifted soils will be retained on the wider MoD estate for use in future restoration and not lost to development. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has confirmed that the scheme will not affect the amenity or well-being of nearby residents or recreational users of local PRoW.
- 1.5.2 There are no areas of woodland or trees within the Application Site and the use of the existing security fencing and the layout of the proposed solar PV arrays avoids the need to install scheme components near to areas of established vegetation. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has confirmed that there will be minimal adverse impact on the low-value modified grassland habitat. Measures to improve retained grassland including species diversification across a minimum area of 0.25ha and sympathetic management of all retained grassland will provide mitigation for the small reduction in grassland area and ensure restoration (recreation) of a higher habitat value and NBB. Installation of artificial habitats will also support species diversification.

DECCA Framework

- 1.5.3 The step-wise approach to achieving NBB places an emphasis on ecosystem enhancement, resilience and connectivity to ensure better biodiversity post-development and the potential gains from the scheme have been considered through the DECCA Framework and are summarised below:
- Diversity will be achieved by increasing the number of wildflower grassland species, and through more sympathetic grassland management and inclusion of artificial habitats to achieve structural diversity.
 - Extent of poor-value modified grassland will be slightly reduced but compensated for by the enhancement of the retained grassland. Following restoration the area of grassland will be restored.
 - Condition of retained grassland will be improved by a more sympathetic management.
 - Connectivity with adjacent habitats, which include areas of established trees and shrubs, is already good and will be enhanced through improvement of the retained grassland. There is no connectivity with statutory or non-statutory designated sites.
 - Aspects such as Adaptability, Recovery, Resistance will be improved through more sympathetic management which will support resilience to drought conditions in particular.
- 1.5.4 There will be no adverse impacts on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites due to a lack of connectivity with identified sites and the confined nature of the work which will stay within the site boundaries as defined by existing built development
- 1.5.5 The proposed solar PV scheme will deliver NBB through the species diversification of retained, low-value grassland, more sympathetic management of all grassland areas within the site, and additional support for species through the inclusion of artificial habitat. As a consequence, the contribution of the Application Site to

the wider area's GI will be higher and the enhanced grassland will increase the diversity and extent of valued habitats in the surrounding area as shown in the figure below.

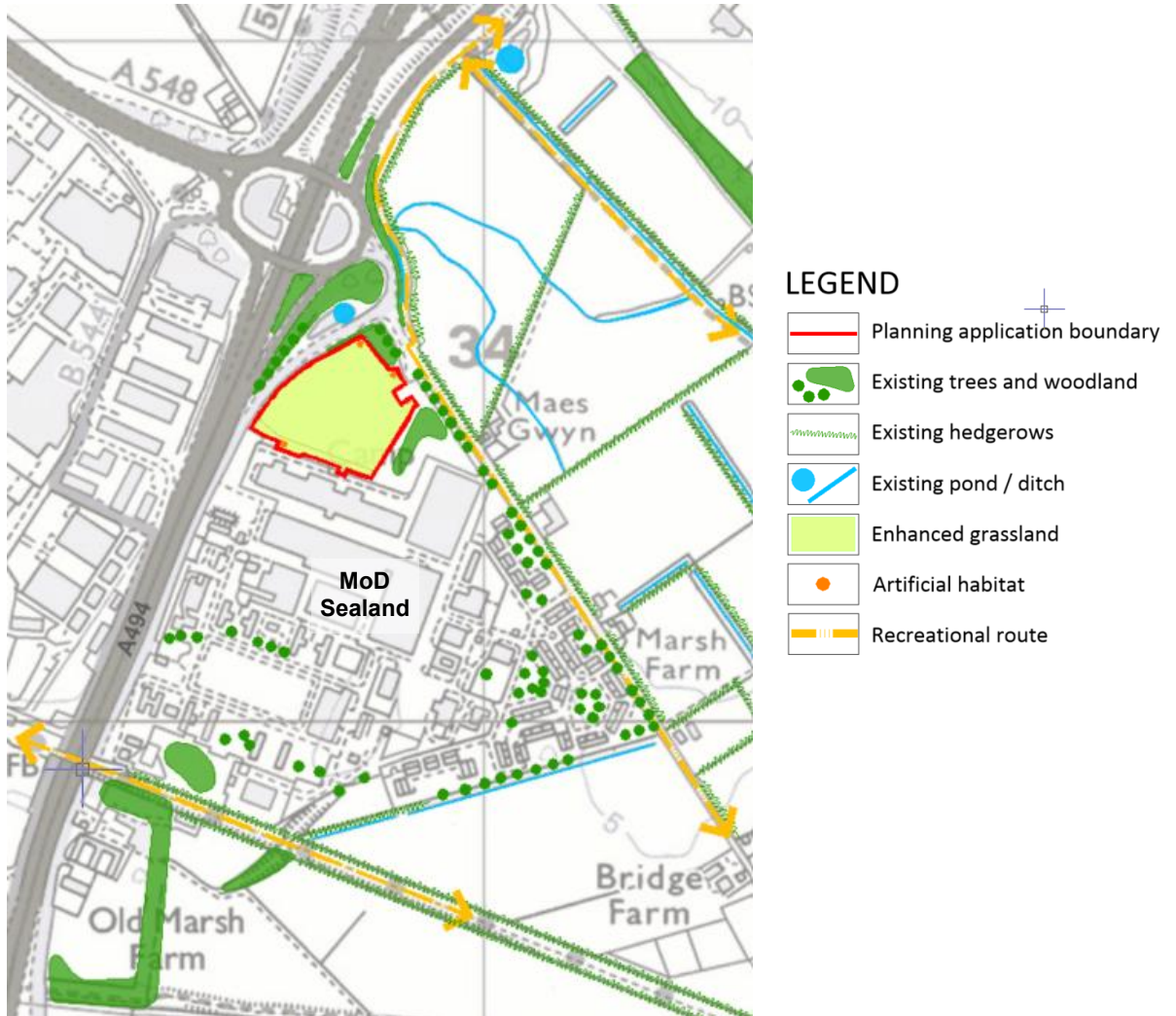


Figure E - GI Components in the vicinity of the Application Site and Proposed Enhanced Habitats (not to scale, grid square = 1km)

1.6 Conclusion

- 1.6.1 This Green Infrastructure Statement accompanies a full planning application by EMCOR UK for permission for a ground-mounted solar PV electricity generating scheme with a generating capacity of 3MW on land at MoD Sealand to the west of Green Lane East in Deeside.
- 1.6.2 The mitigation hierarchy set out in the 'step-wise' approach outlined in PPW12 has been implemented through a combination of impact avoidance, impact minimisation and mitigation / restoration measures and in relation to biodiversity through consideration of the DECCA Framework criteria to promote ecosystem enhancement, resilience and connectivity.
- 1.6.3 There will be no adverse impacts on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites due to a lack of connectivity and the confined nature of the work which will stay within the site boundaries as defined by existing built development.
- 1.6.4 The proposed solar PV scheme will deliver the benefits of renewable energy generation and also a NBB through the species diversification of retained, low-value grassland, more sympathetic management of all grassland areas within the site, and additional support for species through the inclusion of artificial habitat. As a consequence, the contribution of the Application Site to the wider area's GI network will be higher and the enhanced grassland will increase the diversity and extent of valued habitats in the surrounding area.



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